

Heisel, Leanne

From: Pam Shrauger [pam@bigskyhazards.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 27, 2007 2:59 PM
To: Heisel, Leanne
Subject: FW:
Attachments: December_IP memo.pdf

Hi Leanne,

I received a memo regarding the Fire Suppression Interim committee through the Montana Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) Association. I don't directly work in fire suppression operations, but I am a consultant hired frequently by counties across the state to write Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans and Community Wildfire Protection Plans. Through both of these types of plans (required by FEMA and USFS/BLM, respectively), I analyze the hazards, including wildfire, and help the communities develop strategies to reduce their long-term risk to the hazards. I'd be happy to provide the committee with strategies that are typically listed in the plans, if they'd like. The state also has a mitigation plan, maintained by DES, that may also be of interest.

Personally, I think the most important wildfire mitigation strategy is the effective implementation of land use policies. With a good deal of the state's growth occurring in the wildland-urban interface, policies that restrict, or at least require some level of minimum standard for, development in wildfire hazard areas have the potential to minimize the increasing wildfire vulnerabilities in the state. Clearly, this does not address problems that exist currently, but it can keep the problems from growing.

The mitigation strategies may not be tied directly to the fire suppression efforts once a fire has started, but the wildfire problem in Montana needs to be considered from a holistic view that also considers activities that take place long before the fires start. Perhaps this is beyond the scope of the committee, but please let me know if you'd like further details on mitigation strategies being listed in several of the local Montana plans.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment,
 Pam

Pam Shrauger
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Providing Emergency Management and Meteorological Services

From: Curt Petrik [mailto:cpetrik@co.sheridan.mt.us]
Sent: Monday, December 24, 2007 11:25 AM
To: James Zabrocki; 'Bob Fry'; 'Charles Hanson'; 'Dan McGowan'; Dan Reilly; 'Ed Gierke'; 'Fred Naehner'; General Randall Mosley; 'Gordon Rognrud'; Jim Greene; 'Mark Gruener'; 'Martha-Jo Smith'; Norman Parrent; Pam Shrauger; 'Sheena Wilson'; Steve Knecht; 'Bill Converse'; 'Bill Naegeli'; 'Bob Reid'; 'George Gupton'; 'Jolene Jacobson'; Marc McGill; Mark Peck; Robert Ebner; 'Ron Nicholas'; Steve Stanley; 'Wilma Puich'; 'Darrell Stafford'; Deb Coverdell; Haley Gustitis; Jim King; LeAnn Hermance; 'Linda Williams'; Mark Keller; 'Ron Knudson'; Vince Kolar; Belinda Van Nurden; Bill Fleiner; 'Chris Mumme'; 'Chuck Winn'; Jason Shrauger; 'K O'Conner'; 'Kerry O'Conner'; Larry Laknar; Pat Mckelvey; Patrick Lonergan; Paul Spengler; Richard Seidlitz; 'Sally Buckles'; Alan Stempel; Butch Renders; Candy Loehding; Carol Hellyer; Chuck Lee; 'Frank Datta'; 'John Pisk'; Mistica Hisdahl;

1/3/2008

Pam Tierney-Crisafulli; Carol Arkell; Carol Raymond; Darrel Krum; Ed Auker; Ed Joiner; 'Floyd Fisher'; 'Jeff Gates'; 'Jim Kraft'; Ken Mesch; 'Pat Zent'; Susetta Nanto; 'Cheri Kilby'; 'Dan Sietsema'; Fransen Tanja; Greg Speer; Lisa Solf; Rick Seiler; Scott Moran; Sheriff Tom Killham

Subject:

Merry Christmas and Happy New Years to all.

Attached is a memo asking interested parties to comment on Fire Suppression in Montana from the Fire Suppression Interim committee.

Curtis Petrik
Sheridan/Daniels County DES
765-2970

"Never approach a bull from the front, a horse from the rear, or a fool from any direction"
Danny Saradon

Heisel, Leanne

From: Ed Joiner [des@cheyennation.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 27, 2007 11:11 AM
To: Heisel, Leanne
Subject: fire suppression committee

Leanne Heisel
Fire Suppression Committee
Legislative Services Legal Division
P.O. Box 201706
Helena, Montana 59620

I am writing in response to the letter I received for comments to the Fire Suppression Committee. I have been involved in the fire services for over 25 years and I now work in the emergency and disaster services for the Northern Cheyenne Tribe. I have seen the need for the rapid changes in the fire services. I have also seen quite a few changes which have taken place in the cooperation between different jurisdictions.

I am also a member of the Northern Cheyenne Volunteer Fire Department. We have agreements in place with all of our neighboring counties and communities. We also have agreements with different individuals in our area. These are quite beneficial as we all cover large distances.

I know eastern Montana does not receive as much attention as the western part of the state. And I also know that sometimes Tribes are overlooked for a variety of reasons. Our fire protection program was once funded by the BIA under a 638 program. We provide services not only on the reservation but with our surrounding neighbors. A lot of times we are called out to provide structure protection (Urban Interface) with our wildland departments. We all work well together.

Recently with the budget cuts the Federal Government has stopped the funding for our Fire Protection Program. This not only hurts our program as far as fire efforts are hampered, but we also provide quite a few other services such as; Haz-mat incidents, car extrication, structure fire protection, and a variety of other services to help keep our community safe. We are not sure how we are going to be funded but we do provide a necessary service.

Currently our Tribe itself owns no fire fighting apparatus. Our trucks are the property of the BIA. We have a good core of volunteers and we keep up on our training. Without any equipment or funding it makes life pretty tough. We have tried to request equipment but the counties seem to have their needs also which overshadow ours.

As far as wildfires are concerned we are served by the Northern Cheyenne Forestry which is a BIA ran department. They do a pretty good job but they rely on us for structure protection and occasionally water support. They are paid from 8-5 and sometimes during slow times in the season they are not readily available after hours. During these times we are available and are often called upon.

There are quite a few landowners around here that live on the reservation or have businesses on the reservation that pay taxes. These county taxes are not seen again as far as funds going into a fire district budget or equipment even though we are part of Big Horn County and Rosebud County. We often respond or provide mutual aid to these counties without receiving any compensation.

Basically we need equipment (and funding) to keep our efforts alive. I feel as a volunteer fire department we are at a disadvantage being on the reservation as we receive no funding from the counties or state and our federal funding has now been cut off. And being in eastern Montana our fires don't seem so big and devastating but we do have our problems also.

County of Stillwater

Office of Disaster and Emergency Services

Ken Mesch

DES Coordinator

PO Box 795 Columbus, MT 59019

Office: 406-322-8054 Cell: 406-321-0689

December 27, 2007

Fire Suppression Committee
c/o Leanne Heisel
Legislative Services Division
P.O. Box 201706
Helena, Montana 59620-1706

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on fire suppression operations in Montana. We need to learn from the experiences of the recent past to form an effective and efficient strategy for our limited Montana fire suppression resources.

Stillwater County has a history of dangerous fire seasons, with the 2006 Derby Fire causing the greatest impact by burning 208,000 acres, causing the evacuation of hundreds of residences, and burning 26 structures in our county.

Through all these experiences, we learned that there is a sequence of events that occur to create a major destructive wildfire. **The earlier you can implement mitigation, the less resources you will need to expend for fire suppression.** Similarly, the earlier the mitigation, the fewer resources will be destroyed by fire.

Starting with prevention is always cost effective. Fuel reduction/fire breaks on both public and private land are very important. Specifically, we believe in preemptive fire breaks in high risk areas. For example, in 2007, Stillwater County had three fires start along Interstate 90 adjacent to a subdivision of 105 residences called Pine Crest. The fires were ignited by cars and trucks interfacing the grassy shoulder of the road under dry and hot conditions. Opportunities for prevention include closer mowing along the highway right of way and a dozer line fire break along that stretch of I-90. This concept could be implemented statewide by the Montana Department of Transportation in high risk locations for a low cost/ high effect prevention strategy. If a right of way firebreak had been in place near Pine Crest subdivision last summer, it probably would have saved the state the air attack resources needed during the 'Pine Crest Fire'.

Another prevention opportunity becomes obvious where subdivisions interface National Forest Service land. Viewed from above, there are clearly identified vegetation corridors of contiguous dense trees that would be an indefensible corridor for fire transmission.

Again, adequate preemptive fire breaks on both private and public land would provide protection for private property and would save substantial suppression costs.

Stillwater County experienced a horrible fire season in 2006 and then one significantly better in 2007. The difference between the two was clearly the very quick deployment of aircraft dropped water and retardant resources to the initial stages of the 2007 fires. While seemingly an expensive way to put out fires, it has to be considered very cost effective when contrasted with the alternative of fighting a subsequently larger fire and paying for the resulting recovery costs of a major wildfire.

This rapid deployment of the air attack in 2007 was the reason that Pine Crest subdivision still has 105 residences. Another quickly deployed air attack probably prevented a lightning caused fire in the National Forest near the Stillwater (platinum) Mine from destroying mine structures, closing the mine, and having a significant negative impact to the economy of the state. This fire had the same potential as the adjacent Derby fire to burn hundreds of thousands of acres of private and public land.

In summary, Stillwater County has seen it both ways; with air attack resources in the initial phases of a fire and without. We have learned that wildfires in mountainous terrain are nearly impossible to control with trucks and men on the ground. We have learned that once a fire gets to a size over 100 acres, we are dependent on the weather for significant control. Most importantly, we have learned that if fires are attacked right away with air operations equipment, we save property, lives and money.

We ask that the committee look seriously at putting more resources into firefighting **airplanes, helicopters, and the related support services** needed to allow them to be deployed at the earliest evidence of a fire start, especially in areas of denser populations.

~~Thank you~~ for your time and serious consideration of our input. Stillwater County will be happy to participate in future discussions on this issue at your request.

Sincerely,



Ken Mesch, MPA

Stillwater County Office Disaster and Emergency Services



George Bokma,

Stillwater County Fire Warden

Letter to Montana State Fire Suppression Committee

I am pleased to know there has been a state fire suppression committee formed to look into ways to improve fire suppression tactics. With the continued and increasing wildfire incidents throughout the intermountain West, it begs the question: "What has changed, that accounts for the increased frequency, intensity, and costs associated with wildfires in the past 20 years? Certainly the continuing drought and extremely dry conditions within the Forests has exacerbated the problem. But what can be done that is not being done to improve suppression and thereby reduce the catastrophic loss of valuable timber, grazing, recreation values as well as the direct and immediate dollar cost of containment?"

Obviously better coordination between State and Local Fire fighting personnel and their equipment with the U.S. Forest Service would be an excellent first step. However before these questions can be answered in any meaningful way it would likely be helpful to be fully aware of the *source of reasoning* that has brought about the federal agencies *obvious new approach* being taken towards fire management in particular (No.1) and in basic Forest Management, in general (No.2). My first effort in this regard resulted in the enclosed "Critique of Wildland Fire Use" paper enclosed. The information there supplemented by the research of Ron Arnold and Alan Gottlieb has pretty well answered the first question. However the question as to what precipitated these changes was still a mystery. Further investigation proved not only quite revealing, but startling as well. The following is what I found:

In 1946 an organization called the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) was formed to serve as the primary scientific advisor to the United Nations on environmental issues. Since then two additional major international environmental organizations have been created to serve as U.N. advisors; The World Wildlife Fund For Nature (WWF) and the World Resources Institute. All three work closely together to achieve common goals. Paramount of which is to totally stop commercial commodity production on public lands and turn the future over to whatever Nature has to offer.

Define SUSTAINABILITY. Most people's definition means that we manage our renewable resources in a manner that maintains them in perpetuity for man's continued use. However that is definitely not the definition embodied in the various development policies of the World Conservation Strategy Project of the IUCN, UNEP (United Nations Environmental Program) and WWF. Robert Prescott-Allen (a senior consultant to the second World Conservation Project in 1990) stated: "Sustainability calls for a fundamental transformation in how people behave. Changes in behavior can be assisted by laws and incentives.....to a new morality.....and a new World Order."

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This then has led to a (CED) Covenant on Environment and Development Treaty and Agenda 21. Agenda 21 was converted to United States Policy in 1996 in a policy document entitled "Sustainable America" written by President Clinton's Counsel on Sustainable Development. From there it led to the creation of a *new science* to justify the actions being taken by Government employees who Manage various Federal Agencies such as the Forest Service, Nat'l Park Service and BLM. It has evolved into a "new ethic" embracing plants and animals as well as people." And from this came the *holistic science* of "Conservation Biology" which centers on the assumption that "nature knows best." Consequently, all human use and activity should follow "natural patterns within ecosystems." Since many ecosystems cross boundaries of man and may cross national, state and local political boundaries as well as private property boundaries; it follows that environmental law must be superior to property rights and political jurisdictions.

Next this unproven science was introduced to natural resource Colleges and Universities. Students graduating with Conservation Degrees were indoctrinated in this new unproven science.. Then in the late 1990's Federal Agencies ; i.e. U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and others began requiring as a condition of employment as *field managers*, to hold a degree in Conservation including adopting a guiding attitude of Biological Diversity. Taken as a whole these concepts are now being adopted throughout the nation.....including the Universities that formerly taught traditional Forest Management and/or Wildlife Majors. Matter of fact most of these federal agencies including the National Park Service and NGO organizations and/or Environmental Groups including such well known ones as The Nature Conservancy, The Wilderness Society, The Sierra Club and a host of others have signed on to this new unproven science.

To date training centers with volumes of printed propaganda continue to put pressure on federal land managers to embrace these concepts as Ecosystem Management. All designed to eventually discontinue any type of commercial commodity production or livestock grazing on public lands.

What is alarming is all this planned evolution of change occurred in secret behind closed doors. And thereafter gradually force fed to the American Public in bits and pieces in beautifully wrapped packages tied with a red ribbon.

Only now is the General Public realizing how their lives and occupations are being impacted, and serious questions being asked: Such as :

Why are 'let burn' fires allowed to devastate vast acreages of timber?

Where is the concern about the loss of cover in the mountains and the accelerated melting of the snow pack which the farmers depend on for irrigation water ?

Why are ranchers faced with reduced or cancelled grazing permits?

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Why are the National Forests no longer putting up timber sales?

And why is there so much resistance to fire-killed timber sales as well?

Why are recreation rules becoming so restrictive ?

What brought about re-introduction of wolves ?

Why has heavy handed law enforcement on public lands become so visible?

Why has it taken so long for the National Park Service in Yellowstone to address the overpopulation of buffalo and the resulting current problem of their spreading brucellosis to Montana's Cattle Industry?

The answer to all these questions is becoming apparent as we finally are finding out the source of a new Religion being forced on us by an unproven, unwelcome 'nature knows best' land management ethic fostered by a radical environmental community.

So the final question becomes: What can be done to reverse these radical policies that have blind sided the American Public and the Federal Governments like termites devouring a wooden structure ???

I certainly wish I knew the answer to this final question! It would seem that now after all these years of being pretty much held in the dark, the answer has to come from a political revolt in Washington D.C. And in my opinion nothing will happen there until a loud voice is sent there by the public demanding a thorough investigation of how we got into this dead end fix !!

Finally in direct response to your request, I would recommend the following:

- (1.) As soon as is practical conduct an in depth survey of State Timber and Grazing Lands. As regards timber lands, the following information is essential:**
- a. an inventory of timber stands including a cruise to determine standing merchantable board feet by species per acre.**
 - b. determine the aspect and slope of various sites together with accessibility.**
 - c. review the history of logging sales including salvage sales following fire or disease kills.**
 - d. inventory should include aerial photos to supplement on-the-ground surveys.**

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- e. also provide proximity of various sites to National Forests together with available access roads to both.
- f. general health of timber, i.e. insect or disease infestation and estimated standing dead volumes.

With this information it will be possible to structure a bold response to the problems of fire control.

(2.) For example where high density second growth timber poses a lighting caused fire hazard, a thinning operation utilizing post & pole sales might be feasible. Also patches of dead or dying timber could possibly be sold to commercial firewood operators. The goal here being to open up the canopy, reduce the spread of insect & disease depredation, create fire breaks, and create access roads where advisable.

(3.) Take into account the creeks and streams which might lend themselves to small dams to create a ready source of water in event of a fire.

(4.) Certainly where there exists insect or disease infestation, a program of aerial spraying coupled with potential sales might be in order.

(5.) Where ever there exists an urban-timber interface an action program could be initiated to clear accumulated growth of brush or timber. This could be done to some degree by developing incentives on the part of the public owning homes and structures.

As far as state owned range and crop land that is leased to farmers and ranchers:

A plan for fallow strips in appropriate places might be either recommended or required, taking into account of prevailing winds and neighboring lands. Also consider incentives for land owners to own and maintain their own tanker-pumper trucks. And then too, approach the Forest Service and BLM wherever lands join or intersect to discuss plans for cooperative fire prevention and control throughout the state.

These are examples of first steps that can be taken without any hindrance by the problems created by so-called "ecosystem management". Tried and true land management techniques developed through sound science over the past 60 years will yield the desired results you are after. It won't happen overnite, but instead of wasteful spending of millions of dollars reacting to conflagrations, a pro-active management approach will provide the desired results over time.

Max Barker, Augusta, MT

note: research references utilized include web pages of United Nations, Evergreen Magazine, Michael Coffman

A CRITIQUE OF
WILDLAND FIRE USE by Max Barker, December 2007

The origin of Wildland Fire Use which is often referred to as "Let Burn Forest Policy" has puzzled many people for the past 20 years.

Following the devastating fires of 1910 – 1920 on our National Forests, the Forest Service developed a system of manned lookouts throughout the mountain regions for observing lightning strikes and smokes with likely fire starts. These observation points provided the means of pin-pointing the locations by cross referencing them from two or more locations. These 'starts' could then be accessed by hikers and pack strings to attempt to put out the fire before it could grow to an unmanageable size. It required lots of manpower and equipment and frequently used pack strings of mules and horses to provide fire camps, food & equipment, cooks and all the resources necessary to fight a fire. The biggest problem was time to get there.

Beginning in the 30's a new dimension came into service when Bob Johnson's Flying Service began flying in men and materials from Missoula to the remote areas of fire starts. Since this proved advantageous from both a cost and time standpoint, this system grew and ultimately resulted in the Forest Service starting a Smoke Jumping School so firefighters could get on a fire shortly after it was reported. This system grew and was refined and ultimately was used throughout the western states and Alaska saving untold expense of firefighting costs and greatly reducing the loss of valuable timber stands.

Along with these years of developing and improving forest fire controls, the modern scientific timber management plans were developed. The idea of balancing timber harvests with a whole new concept of "sustained yield" evolved. This system was applied on nearly every National Forest and required annual harvests no larger than what was grown plus an average of what might be anticipated lost to fires insects and disease.

The western forests differ in annual precipitation, average temperatures on various aspects, terrain and consequently species and annual growth rates. As well as ideal conditions for regrowth. These characteristics lend themselves to specific management techniques regarding the growing and harvest of timber, erosion control, fire suppression as well as disease and insect control.

A spin off from the early "environmental movements" (which had emphasized controlling pollution by toxic wastes generated in various commercial activities such as mining and factories of various kinds) began directing their concerns towards Forest Management methods and in particular "patch and strip clearcuts" that were showing up from the air or as one drove through the mountains. They panicked and no matter that the first clearcuts by and large had new stands of regeneration, the cry went out that "the loggers are cutting down all the trees and we better do something or none will be left !!" This "fear" was an easy "sell" to the general public and in particular to many wealthy "foundations" which began contributing grants to these radical environmental groups.

That is when things really began to change and coupled with the new "Endangered Species Act", these groups had everything they needed to achieve their radical goals: 1. The fear generated within the general public; 2. The Endangered Species Act to back their unscientific goals; and 3. The funding to cover costs of their activities including salaries and expenses of their active membership.

Time passes from the 30's and the War years of the 40's through the 50's, 60's and 70's and essentially all the time behind the scenes, the environmental groups were getting organized in grass roots by people that has no knowledge or training in the science of Forestry.

By designating either an animal or plant found living within the boundaries of a National Forest as an "endangered species" all activity could be shut down whether it be Timber Harvests, Mining or Recreation.

Their next step was to apply a whole new concept of "Forest Management". This was

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accomplished first with the Spotted Owl designation on the so-called ancient forests west of the Cascades. After that was accomplished the "Eastside Ecosystem Management Project in the Interior Columbia River Basin Project" was proposed; ie. ICBEMP for short. This included most if not all the National Forests east of the Cascades including Washington, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. This was apparently granted by the Federal Administration to the so-called "green groups" in exchange for their dropping of injunctions against all timber sales west of the Cascades.

Next was the new management designation: i.e. Conservation Biology with emphasis on Biodiversity and it's Sustainability over time. This concept is concerned only with plant and animal habitat and does not consider any Human use of the land. This then coupled with the Endangered Species ActECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT was born! Thereafter any human use of the land was to be incidental and negotiated in light of conservation biology.

Now one might ask: What has all this to do with Wildland Fire Use?

The answer lies within the result of elimination of all CLEAR CUTS. The abomination of modern forest management in the minds of the environmentalists.

As time passed it became apparent following more and more destructive lighting caused wildfire conflagrations, that "openings in the forest canopy" were needed to help in the control of fire spread. How was this to be accomplished?? The answer was WILDLAND FIRE USE with all the attended activity we have witnessed during the past 20 or so years.

In the minds of most Professional Foresters this entire new program of management has become the RELIGION of the environmental community and embraced by a good share of the current National Forest employees whether they believed in it or not.

Even many if not most of the Universities have either dropped their former Forestry Curriculums or merged some of their former courses with Wildlife Management curriculums. The reason given for these drastic curriculum changes is the difficulty of placing traditional graduates in employment anywhere except in either state or private forest management positions where traditional forest management was practiced. By comparison few opportunities exist there for traditional forestry graduates.

With the recent weather patterns of drought and often higher than average temperatures, it has become impossible in most cases of conducting a "fire use" activity within Wilderness areas without any fire becoming an uncontrollable firestorm. Much the same result in the National Forests as well.

Much of the general public has become upset, disillusioned, and distraught with the results they continue to witness across western America.

What we are discussing here only partly concerns the "Forest Urban Interface" such as we have witnessed in southern California. That is a different problem that the Forest Service has been dealing with and they should be applauded for their recent efforts. Also their efforts to protect private property within the inholdings of National Forests is fully recognized and appreciated. The removal of dense undergrowth close by structures is now being practiced.

Since this new Wildland Fire Use Policy coupled with "Ecosystem Management" has simply failed. much of the public trust of the National Forest Supervisors and Rangers has evaporated. Beyond the question of destructive fires lies the question of timber production for America. Are we going to substitute steel for lumber in the construction of homes and businesses and and continue to allow the Forest Service to obliterate the existing access roads needed for timer stand improvement, fire, disease and insect control ?? And in effect write off the products from our National Forests that have contributed so much to the building of America!

Then if that is the case, what about the dearth and loss of recreation that provides millions of people with a reprieve from their high pressure lifestyles in the cities across the land?? The blackened forests are bad enough but here again we find heavy-handed restrictive rules on recreation

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pursuits. Brought about by so-called 'endangered species' under the ESA law which has designated animals that really have never been endangered (grizzly bears) or ones re-introduced (such as wolves) to which the public is predomently vehemently opposed.

Perhaps we should all ask the question: "Are We, the general public, going to continue to allow radical environmental groups and their wealthy foundation supporters to blindside us with their Junk Science forced on our Public Land Managers ?

If the answer is NO ! , then it is high time we get organized and begin educating our elected officials who represent us so that they in turn can begin to base their votes on what is Best In The Long Run for the People and their Communities who reside near and depend on the Federally Managed Public Lands for their livelihood as well as the rest of the nation's people who depend on the commodities and recreation these lands have historically provided.

Note: much of what is contained here is substantiated by research provided by Ron Arnold and Alan Gottlieb in "Undue Influence" and "Trashing the Economy" published by the Free Enterprise Press, a division of the Center For The Defense of Free Enterprise. 12500 N.E. 10th Place, Bellvue, WA 98005